

COUNTRY DATA: UNITED KINGDOM: Information from the CIA World

INTRODUCTION

The United Kingdom has historically played a leading role in developing parliamentary democracy and in advancing literature and science. At its zenith in the 19th century, the British Empire stretched over one-fourth of the earth's surface. The first half of the 20th century saw the UK's strength seriously depleted in two World Wars and the Irish republic withdraw from the union. The second half witnessed the dismantling of the Empire and the UK rebuilding itself into a modern and prosperous European nation. As one of five permanent members of the UN Security Council, a founding member of NATO, and of the Commonwealth, the UK pursues a global approach to foreign policy. The UK is also an active member of the EU, although it chose to remain outside the Economic and Monetary Union. The Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, and the Northern Ireland Assembly were established in 1999. The latter was suspended until May 2007 due to wrangling over the peace process, but devolution was fully completed in March 2010.

GEOGRAPHY

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| Location | Western Europe, islands including the northern one-sixth of the island of Ireland between the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea, northwest of France |
| Area | 243,610 sq km |
| Climate | temperate; moderated by prevailing southwest winds over the North Atlantic Current; more than one-half of the days are overcast |
| Natural Resources | coal, petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, lead, zinc, gold, tin, limestone, salt, clay, chalk, gypsum, potash, silica sand, slate, arable land |
| Total Renewable Water Resources | 160.6 cu km (2005) |
| Freshwater Withdrawal | total: 11.75 cu km/yr (22%/75%/3%) per capita: 197 cu m/yr (1994) |
| Natural Hazards | winter windstorms; floods |
| Environmental Issues | continues to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (has met Kyoto Protocol target of a 12.5% reduction from 1990 levels and intends to meet the legally binding target and move toward a domestic goal of a 20% cut in emissions by 2010); by 2005 the government reduced the amount of industrial and commercial waste disposed of in landfill sites to 85% of 1998 levels and recycled or composted at least 25% of household waste, increasing to 33% by 2015 |

PEOPLE

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| Population | 62,348,447 (July 2010 est.) |
| Ethnic Groups | white (of which English 83.6%, Scottish 8.6%, Welsh 4.9%, Northern Irish 2.9%) 92.1%, black 2%, Indian 1.8%, Pakistani 1.3%, mixed 1.2%, other 1.6% (2001 census) |
| Religions | Christian (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist) 71.6%, Muslim 2.7%, Hindu 1%, other 1.6%, unspecified or none 23.1% (2001 census) |

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| Languages | English note: the following are recognized regional languages: Scots (about 30% of the population of Scotland), Scottish Gaelic (about 60,000 in Scotland), Welsh (about 20% of the population of Wales), Irish (about 10% of the population of Northern Ireland), Cornish (some 2,000 to 3,000 in Cornwall) |
| Literacy Rate | 99% |
| Major Infectious Diseases | HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS: 77,000 (2007 est.) |
| GOVERNMENT | |
| Type | constitutional monarchy and Commonwealth realm |
| Independence | 12 April 1927 (Royal and Parliamentary Titles Act establishes current name of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland); notable earlier dates: 927 (minor English kingdoms united); 3 March 1284 (enactment of the Statute of Rhuddlan uniting England and Wales); 1536 (Act of Union formally incorporates England and Wales); 1 May 1707 (Acts of Union formally unite England and Scotland as Great Britain); 1 January 1801 (Acts of Union formally unite Great Britain and Ireland as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland); 6 December 1921 (Anglo-Irish Treaty formalizes partition of Ireland; six counties remain part of the United Kingdom as Northern Ireland) |
| Constitution | unwritten; partly statutes, partly common law and practice |
| Legal System | based on common law tradition with early Roman and modern continental influences; has nonbinding judicial review of Acts of Parliament under the Human Rights Act of 1998; accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction with reservations |
| ECONOMY | |
| Agricultural Products | cereals, oilseed, potatoes, vegetables; cattle, sheep, poultry; fish |
| Industries | machine tools, electric power equipment, automation equipment, railroad equipment, shipbuilding, aircraft, motor vehicles and parts, electronics and communications equipment, metals, chemicals, coal, petroleum, paper and paper products, food processing, textiles, clothing, other consumer goods |
| Import commodities | manufactured goods, machinery, fuels; foodstuffs |
| Import Partners | Germany 12.87%, US 9.74%, China 8.88%, Netherlands 6.94%, France 6.64%, Belgium 4.86%, Norway 4.84%, Ireland 4.01%, Italy 3.99% (2009) |
| Export Commodities | manufactured goods, fuels, chemicals; food, beverages, tobacco |
| Export Partners | US 14.71%, Germany 11.06%, France 8%, Netherlands 7.79%, Ireland 6.89%, Belgium 4.65%, Spain 4% (2009) US 14.71%, Germany 11.06%, France 8%, Netherlands 7.79%, Ireland 6.89%, Belgium 4.65%, Spain 4% (2009) |
| Per Capita GDP | \$34,200 (2009 est.) |
| Population below poverty line | 14% (2006 est.) |

*CITATIONS: All information included above is extracted from the CIA World Factbook except where noted.